

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

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FOR ATHERTON WITH SECRETARY'S PARTY

FOLLOWING REPEAT KUWAIT 1034 ACTION SECSTATE INFO ABU DHABI
BEIRUT DOHA JIDDA LONDON MANAMA TEHRAN DTD 05 MAR

QTE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE KUWAIT 1034

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, KU

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE GOVERNMENTAL CRISIS IN KUWAIT

SUMMARY: ON MARCH 4 GOK MINISTERS WALKED OUT OF KUWAIT'S
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOLLOWING FAILURE OF DEPUTIES TO AGREE TO STRIKE
FROM RECORD REMARKS OFFENSIVE TO GOVERNMENT. ALLEGEDLY MINISTERS
HAVE BEEN INSTRUCTED BY CROWN PRINCE/PRIME MINISTER NOT TO RETURN
UNTIL FURTHER ADVISED. WHILE EMBASSY EXPECTS BACKROOM MANEUVERING
WILL PERMIT REMARKS TO BE STRICKEN SOME POSSIBILITY EXISTS
GOVERNMENT WILL FACE FIRST CRISIS WITH NEW FOURTH NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY AND NEW ELECTIONS COULD BE CALLED. END SUMMARY.

1. KUWAIT'S MONTH-OLD GOVERNMENT RAN INTO TROUBLE IN MARCH 4
SESSION OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. IT WAS EXPECTED THAT, WITH ADDITION
OF MANY ARTICULATE LIBERALS IN NEW ASSEMBLY, SESSIONS WOULD NOT
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BE SOMNOLENT. MARCH 4 SESSION, HOWEVER, IS INDICATION CABINET

HAD BETTER START DOING ITS HOMEWORK BEFORE SESSIONS.

2. PROBLEM AROSE WHEN DEPUTY JASIM AL-QITAMI QUESTIONED PRACTICE OF USING AMIRI SPEECH FOR PRESENTING GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAM. QITAMI ARGUED THAT, SINCE PERSON OF AMIR IS INVOLABLE, HOW COULD DEPUTIES CHALLENGE OR QUESTION VARIOUS ASPECTS OF PROGRAM.

3. MIN INT & DEFENSE, SPEAKING ON GOVT'S BEHALF, STATED DEPUTIES COULD

CHALLENGE INDIVIDUAL MINISTERS AT ANY TIME AND COULD ALSO CHALLENGE MINISTERS' BUDGET SUBMISSIONS.

4. QITAMI INSISTED AMIRI SPEECH WAS NOT PROPER VEHICLE TO PRESENT GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAM. QITAMI'S VIEW SECONDED BY LEFTIST DEPUTY AHMAD AL-KHATIB, WHO CRITICIZED REPLY MADE BY MINDEF AND CLAIMED MINISTERS WERE NOTHING MORE THAN PERSONAL EMPLOYEES OF CROWN PRINCE AND PRIME MINISTER.

5. AT THIS POINT MINDEF DEMANDED KHATIB'S REMARKS BE STRICKEN FROM RECORD, STATING MINISTERS WOULD LEAVE ASSEMBLY AND NOT RETURN UNTIL THIS WAS DONE. SEVERAL DEPUTIES OBJECTED TO MINDEF'S "THREAT" AND DEMANDED IT BE STRICKEN FROM RECORD. IT WAS AGREED THAT MOTION TO STRIKE BOTH REMARKS FROM RECORD SHOULD BE PUT TO VOTE. ONLY 27 OF 33 REQUIRED VOTED TO HAVE REMARKS STRICKEN, TWO VOTED AGAINST AND REST OF ASSEMBLY ABSTAINED. AFTER VOTES MINDEF LED MINISTERS OUT OF ASSEMBLY.

6. DEPUTY ABD-AL-AZIZ AL-MASA'ID TOLD NEWSMEN MINISTERS HAD BEEN TOLD TO RETURN TO THEIR MINISTRIES AND NOT TO RETURN TO ASSEMBLY UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

7. COMMENT: IF MINISTERS DO NOT RETURN TO ASSEMBLY, AMIR WOULD THEN HAVE TO DISSOLVE MONTH-OLD BODY AND HOLD NEW ELECTIONS. ALTHOUGH GOVERNMENT HAS MAJORITY IN ANY KEY ISSUE, MIN DEF'S THREAT CAUSED MANY TO ABSTAIN. IN ORDER FOR ASSEMBLY TO CAUSE DONWFALL OF CABINET, TWO-THIRD VOTE IS REQUIRED, AND THIS IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY. THERE WILL BE MUCH BACK ROOM MANEUVERING TO AVOID A CRISIS. IT IS LIKELY COOLER HEADS WILL PREVAIL AND BOTH REMARKS WILL BE STRICKEN. WITH AMIR IN ALGIERS AND CROWN PRINCE PLANNING TRIP TO SAUDI ARABIA, CURRENT CRISIS COMES AT MOST INOPPORTUNE TIME LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FOR GOVERNMENT. IF CRISIS PERSISTS, THE CROWN PRINCE MAY BE FORCED TO POSTPONE HIS PLANNED MARCH 9 TRIP TO SAUDI ARABIA ONCE AGAIN. STOLTZFUS UNQTE INGERSOLL

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